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## POETRY AND PIE-CRUST.

It was a fearful thing when Podmore broke down in his Virgil; it attacked and withered us all, like a blight falling upon apple-blossom. We were, as Mr Carlyle's bricklayer, building without plummet and level, the result being a rush down and confused welter of ruin. We had hoped to escape on Podmore's merits, as wrecked men trust for safety to the hawser thrown out and secured on land; but the hawser had snapped. Podmore successful, the doctor had been appeased—there had been hope; but Podmore a failure, where were we all?

'You don't know this, sir,' said the doctor in his richest double-bass; 'you don't know this, Mr Podmore,' with ironic stress on the *mis*ter. 'Next boy—next, next. Take him down. Go on again, sir!'

Poor Podmore could only stammer forth most debilitated construing. He did not know where he was; he had lost both compass and rudder, and was beating about anyhow, anywhere, quite at the mercy of the gale.

*Jam pater Æneas et jam Trojana juvenus  
Conveniunt stratoque super discumbitur ostro.*

The doctor rolled forth the lines in fine-flavoured, full-bodied tones, smacking his lips enjoyingly afterwards, as though a pleasant taste was left in his mouth. Podmore shipped a tremendous sea, and went quite on his beam-ends.

'Won't do, Mr Podmore—won't do. Next boy—next, next, next. Go up, Smythers. Take him down. Go on again, sir!'

It was all guess-work for the rest of us. It was like bidding at an auction, none sure of the reserved price. Podmore was alternately pale and red with anguish and confusion; the tears stood in his eyes. It was as though he were being hurled down stairs—he fell three and four, and six and eight at a time. The doctor had hunted him well-nigh through the class; at last he wearied of the chase; perhaps he thought he had sufficiently run his quarry.

'You don't know this, sir. You're a shuffler—a lazy, idle shuffler. I'll teach you to skulk. Get it all off by heart, sir. Write it out six times. Stop in, sir. Put him down, monitor. Now, go on!' and the doctor's keen little gray eyes ran down his regiment of scholars, all preternaturally serious and motionless, trying hard to appear rapt in their books, and to evade the doctor's attention. 'Go on, Pipton. I'll teach you to fidget your feet about!'

Pipton wriggled up, gave a blank stare at the doctor, and then dashed madly at the task before him, as though it were a thing to be carried by desperate

assault. Over a series of the most appalling blunders Pipton held on his way, hoping ultimately to reach the goal. His errors were patent to all, or nearly so, yet the doctor did not stop him; he only gazed at him grimly over his spectacles, waited till he had galloped himself quite breathless, and then went up and boxed his ears violently with the Virgil.

'O please, sir!' shouted Pipton, putting up his arms in angles on each side to protect his ears, and screwing up his features to represent his notion of fearful penitence.

'Don't "please, sir" me, sir,' cried the doctor, looking at him severely from under his spectacles. (Nobody knew exactly why the doctor wore spectacles. He was always frowning over them in a very impressive way, or else, with his head thrown back, he was gazing out from beneath them. The spectacles were never moved; they did not accommodate themselves to the doctor, but the doctor accommodated himself to them, looking over or under them as seemed most convenient to him at the moment.) 'Why don't you learn your lessons, sir? Crying's no use, sir. You're a disgrace to the school, sir. Put him down, monitor. Go on, Guttridge!'

But the end came at last, as it must come to everything. The Virgil-lesson was over. The doctor had made a most merciless attack upon the shufflers, and the imposition-book was very full. But at last we were free for a short span.

'How was it you smashed up like that, Pod?' I inquired when we were in the playground.

'Why, he didn't know it,' interrupted Pipton, his ears still blushing from their recent punishment.

'Yes, I did,' said Podmore; 'only I was thinking of something else when the doctor started me, and I couldn't get right in time.'

'Oh, ah!' Pipton was incredulous.

'What were you thinking about, Pod?' I asked.

'Never you mind!' Pod looked uneasy, and turned away.

Pipton burst out with: 'Well, and wasn't I thinking of something else? Can't other people be thinking of something else? But I ain't a favourite. Did you see him hit me?'

'Did he hurt?'

'Not much. But I'll serve him out; you see if I don't. I believe there's an act of parliament, or something of that sort, to prevent masters hitting boys over the head. My father's a lawyer. You see if I don't have him up for it. Many a man's been hanged at the Old Bailey for less. Mind, you were a witness.'

'Don't brag, Pip,' said Podmore. 'You know you won't do anything.'

'Won't I, though? You see if I won't! Then privately to me: 'Ain't Podmore cocky? I hate him. Don't you? He's a sneak, I think. Oh, I forgot; you're his friend—you are.'

Yes, Podmore was my friend, my invaluable friend. It arose in this way. Podmore had been the marble millionaire of the school, and there was a combination to ruin him. The game was 'laggings out.' For a long while, success fluctuated. A truce was declared during school-hours. One minute after the doctor had closed his book, and announced the dismissal of the class in a grating loud 'Go!' operations in that boy's hazard, 'laggings out,' were resumed. The Fates were dead against Podmore. His losses became very heavy; he was reduced to his last dozen—to his last six—his last three—his last; and now that had gone! Fortune was merciless. Podmore was turning away with the vague, blank, fatigued look of the ruined gambler, when his eye fell upon me—a deeply interested spectator of the game, and its consequences. I had but one marble in the world—it was a very ewe-lamb among marbles—I loved it; it had won me many triumphs at ring-taw; it was the sole remaining one of a large departed family. I had hoped to have retained it all my life. Podmore's ruined look touched me. I put my hand into my pocket; I produced that marble; I gave it to him, and felt as though a tooth had been drawn from my head—a blank created in my life impossible to be filled.

'Go in and win!' I said.

'You're a trump!' murmured Podmore, with tears in his eyes, as he shook my hand heartily.

He did go in—and he won. He recovered his late losses—more—he took the possessions of his enemies; he broke the opposition bank, and placed himself on the highest eminence of marble wealth. From that hour Podmore was my friend.

I was twelve. In a faded water-colour portrait painted of me about that time, I find myself endowed with a curious disproportion of flesh to bone. It was a hard growing time with me, and my latitude would in nowise keep pace with my longitude. I had a tendency to take after that favourite figure in the fantoccini performance, whose limbs, at a given signal, become elongated in so phenomenal a manner. My clothes seemed made less to cover me than as things for me to outgrow and stultify. At Dr Swaby's I earned the title of 'Skinny,' a name which my appearance very justly warranted. There was no denying the appropriateness of that playground christening. The word gradually became abbreviated. After a time, I found I began to answer, like the dogs in the *Times'* advertisements, to the name of Skin, and ultimately to that of Sky, beyond which it did not seem possible to go in the way of condensation.

On summer evenings we played cricket in the meadow at the back of Dr Swaby's school, Lexicon House, Mortlake. Podmore was a round, rosy, plump, active boy—rather a good bat. He was a match at cricket for almost any boy at Dr Swaby's, unless it was Cuckfield Primus, who was called Lamp-post, on account of his extraordinary height, which I have since had reason to believe did not exceed five feet five inches. But on the evening I refer to, Podmore was caught out, first ball—by Duff, too, who was known all over the school as 'Butter-fingers,' and the worst hand going at a catch.

Old Pod came slowly to where I was standing; he sat himself down on his bat; he looked rather dispirited.

'Well, Sky, it's a bad day with me, isn't it? I'm knocked over all sorts of ways, ain't I?'

'What's the matter, Pod? Have a bit of apple?'

'No, thank you. I can't eat.'

And he did not speak for some minutes, rubbing his up-bent nose meditatively with the handle of his bat, and watching the game moodily, and without the usual animation in his round British blue eyes. I

went up close to him; I sat down by his side; in school-boy fashion, I put my arm round his neck. There is no mask-wearing in youthful likings and dislikings.

'What's gone wrong, Pod? Do tell me.'

'Nothing, Sky.'

'Yes, there has. Tell me. Ain't I your friend? Won't I stand by you? Do have some apple—have it all!'

'You're a good sort, my dear old Sky. I'll tell you some day soon—not now.'

He was getting better, I could see.

'Hullo! there's Pipton stumped; very neatly too, by Jove! Bravo our side!'

Suddenly some one cried out, 'Here's Medlar!' and a loud cry of welcome arose as a little old man with a basket—a loose green baize napkin shrouding its contents—jumped lightly over the stile in the north-east corner of the meadow, and approached the cricketers. He was the school pie-man.

'Yes, I've got a few things,' he said in his shrill treble voice, drawing away the green baize from the succulent contents of his basket. 'Not much, though, d'ye see, 'cos I been to 'Am Fair. Such a fair—my eye, nearly sold my all! Bulls-eyes? Certainly, I have—stunners too. Brandy-balls, surely! I'd back these here brandy-balls against any you could get for miles round. No, Mr Pipton, sir; please don't ask me. I never could abide speculation. I never tosses, and I never ticks. Ready money's my game. Small profits and quick returns—them's my mottoes. The three-cornered tarts is to-day pertikler lovely. Look at this here one, now—ain't that a pacter? He's a lucky one, I says, as buys that tart. All right; sold to Mr Smythers—knew I couldn't keep it long. But here's another every bit as good. Now, who'll buy this?' And so on.

He had little round sharp eyes like a robin, and a friendly pleasant smile on his shrivelled face, mottled with red, and blue, and purple, from exposure to the weather. He wore a hat, which had been originally black, but which, from some defect in its dye, now approached a dun green in hue, with dirty white edges, where the nap had been worn off. A diagonal line across the side betrayed very clearly the join in the material, which no amount of brushing, ironing, and vamping-up would now conceal. With a hat that is too small, as this one was, it is always necessary to give one side of the head a preference, as the whole can in no way be covered. The hat may be worn quite over the forehead, and almost on to the eyebrows, or else completely at the back of the head, leaving the forelock exposed. Mr Medlar, the pie-man to Lexicon House, chose to adopt the former mode, leaving a bald crescent to be seen at the back of his head, with a fringe of short iron-gray hair appended to it. He was addicted to large shirt-collars of a three-cornered pattern, that brought them into association with his pastry. A small wizened withe of checked green and salmon-coloured muslin was wound tightly round his neck; on state occasions, he had been seen with a frill to his throat, secured by a brooch—and a waistcoat of faded purple plush. But perhaps the most remarkable item of his attire was his coat. It was of light-blue cloth, very high in the collar, and with a swallow-tail skirt, the two final buttons of which quite reached his heels. It was likewise very long for him in the sleeves, which he wore turned back, exhibiting linings of rusty black velvet. He was often questioned about his coat.

'Well, it is a good coat, ain't it? Sur-prising how this coat wears—quite sur-prising. Why, it's been more nor thirty year in my family this coat have—thirty-two year come Michaelmas. It belonged to my brother Mike—it did. He was married in this coat; he was steward aboard of the Margate hoy. Before steamers? I should think so—long. Well, poor Mike, he went abroad, and got drowned in them

Calcutta rivers, and he bequeathed me this coat. His widdler couldn't abide to see it for ever so. She always bust into tears so much so as I couldn't wear it ever. But she married again afterwards. So then I took to it; and it's a prime coat—gentlemanly I call it, and fits—ah, like a glove, it do! It might have been made for me; though Mike was a good sixteen inches taller than I am. They don't make such coats now—can't do it, for never so. The secret's dead; and, what's more, they'll never find it out. Gooseberry-puff? Here you are.'

'O my! What a lot of pastry, and what a little jam!' The epicure was already developed in Duff.

'That's the beauty of it, that is,' answered Medlar to the objector. 'Such pastry! You don't often see such pastry, though I say it—now, do you?'

'I should like to see more jam.' There was quite the pertinacity of the confirmed gourmand about Duff.

'Oh, there's heaps of jam—heaps. Your eye deceives you. It's the wonderful way in which that 'ere pastry's riz. Ain't it light and flaky, and airy-like now—ain't it? Greasy? Bless you, there ain't a drop of grease there—there ain't.'

'How do you hollow out the tart like this, Medlar? Do you scoop it out with a spoon, or blow it out with a quill?'

'Lor! Mr Cuckfield Primus, we don't do them tricks. Very well for poulterers and sich. It's all the extraordinary beauty of the pastry as does it. Now, who's for hardbake? Here's a prime lot; going cheap.'

'Did your daughter make that pastry, Medlar?' Podmore had drawn near, and was making this inquiry.

'She did, sir.'

'Isn't her name Nancy?'

'It is, sir; leastwise, it's Nan for short. Short and sweet, I always says; and sweet she is.'

'And short?'

'Well, no. I should say she was tall, and straight as a harrow; and such a figure! No hartifice nor nothing of that sort. Real genuine—no mistake about it. She's a gem; there, that's what she is.'

'Your only daughter, Medlar?'

'Only child, wus luck, Mr Podmore. Three on 'em gone to glory this many a year, and lying in old Hammersmith churchyard along with Mrs M. Bless them! I says. A three-cornered, Mr Podmore? This 'ere's the ticket.'

'And she makes all your pastry, Medlar?'

'Every crumb. Not, of course, the brandy-balls. We buys them wholesale; and good uns they is for the money.'

'She must be very clever, Medlar?'

'A out-and-out genius, sir, for three corners, sir. Born with it, I should say. We all has our gifts; hers is pastry.'

'What's yours, Medlar?'

'Well, I don't know as I knows, Mr Pipton. It ain't luck, that's what it ain't.'

'It's singing. Medlar can sing like one o'clock—can't you, Medlar?'

'Lor! Mr Smythers, how you do quiz me to be sure!'

'Here's a lark! Medlar's going to sing. Come-on, you fellows.' Smythers was greatly exhilarated.

'I only knows one song, sir; never could get beyond that.'

'Sing it—sing it!'

'Don't ask me, sir.'

'If you don't sing, Medlar, when you're asked, I'll never buy another bull's-eye of you.'

'Well, empty my basket—break me; buy up my last raspberry-tart. That's right! Well, now, here goes!'

But singing was not a thing to be entered upon lightly by Medlar. Preparation was evidently necessary; and he, with this view, went through a sketchy

sort of toilet. He put his empty basket carefully on one side, covering it with the now superfluous green baize, as though there were a possibility of its catching cold. He took out of his hat a red and buff cotton handkerchief, and wiped his forehead earnestly. He further produced a small pocket-comb, with which he arranged the narrow fringe of iron-gray hair at the back of his head. He adjusted his shirt-collars so that they should cut him nicely under the ears, and he brought down his cuffs well over his hands. Generally, he stiffened himself; and with his feet in what dancing-masters call the first position, and the rest of his body in the attitude into which soldiers start suddenly at the cry of 'Attention,' he began his song. Having a very tottering, feeble, shrilly, small voice, of course his song was of a stirring, forcible, and energetic character. Something about

Hairs of oak air our ships,  
Jolly tars air our men;  
And we fight and we con-kee-ur  
Agen and agen.

*Chorus*—Hairs of oak, &c.

This song concluded, Medlar went off on his homeward way. Podmore, I noticed, had some conversation with him as he crossed the stile. The old man disappeared, and Podmore came back blushing very much.

'What is it, Pod?'

'O Sky!' he began. 'But you won't tell any one? Honour—you won't? Well, I'll tell you! What do you think? Do you know—I almost believe, and he paused.

'O make haste, Pod!' The agony of suspense was too great.

'I rather think—I'm in love.'

'Lor, Pod, do you really? What a game! How red you are!'

'I can't help it.'

'But who with?—tell us who with?'

'Mind it's a solemn secret at present—with Nancy Medlar.'

'What! the pie-man's daughter?'

'Yes.'

'O my! Are you in real earnest, Pod?'

'Why not? Why shouldn't I love her? Do you think she isn't worthy of my love? Haven't you heard him speak of her, and isn't it beautiful? Makes all his pastry. There's affection—there's heart.'

'I daresay you are right, Pod. Anyhow, I'll stand by you. Is she pretty?'

'She's fair, with blue eyes, and golden hair.'

Podmore seemed to think I was not sufficiently alive to the importance of Nancy Medlar's position in the social scale. I suppose lovers' friends always seem to lovers very cold, captious, and incredulous.

'Do you think pie-making isn't respectable? Why, wasn't there some princess or other in the *Arabian Nights* who made tarts?'

'Certainly there was,' I replied.

'And didn't King Alfred once, in the neat-herd's hut, do something in the baking way?'

'He did,' I admitted.

'When did you see her, Pod?' He looked down.

'Well, Sky, to tell you the truth, I haven't seen her at all—that's the fact.'

'You're in love with her, then, from description?' He nodded assent.

'But I'm going to tea at Medlar's soon—very soon. He's asked me; and I may bring a friend—and I'll take you—and then I shall see her. Oh, won't it be jolly, Sky?'

I thought it would, but not so jolly as he thought it.

'Was it this made you break down this morning?'

'Well, Sky, I think it must have been.'

On a certain half-holiday soon after this, Podmore and I obtained the doctor's permission to be absent



for a few hours in the afternoon. Podmore's attachment had been kept a profound secret. His mind was apparently relieved by his confession to me, and he no longer laid himself open to the onslaughts of the doctor. He could now manage to accomplish his lessons creditably and still have time to indulge his imagination in many flights concerning Nancy Medlar. The doctor's confidence in him was nearly restored, and the whole school was gradually recovering from the shock it received on the occasion of Podmore's memorable break-down. Medlar had been apprised of our intention to visit him, and received the information with great apparent pleasure. He said he was 'awful flattered like by the honour of seeing two sich gents at his crib.' Podmore and I had great discussions about the matter. Ought he not, in his position of lover, to make some delicate present to the object of his affections? and what should that consist of? Podmore was greatly in favour of a church-service bound in imitation morocco, with a gilt clasp, and fitting tightly into a leathern over-all. My suggestions rather tended to a work-box, lined with red silk, and with a looking-glass inside the lid. Both propositions, however, were negatived by the fact of our resources being at too low an ebb to admit of any considerable demand upon them. It was late in the half-year, and eighteenthpence was all we could muster, though we made a common purse on the occasion. It was ultimately decided that the special offering to Nancy should stand over until after the holidays, or some chance replenishment of our pockets, and that, meanwhile, the eighteenthpence should be expended in aid of the entertainment generally at Medlar's. With this view, a bottle of superior British wine, red-currant, of extraordinary quality, was purchased and taken with us on our visit.

In Little Upper Church Lane, Hammersmith, stood Gerkin's Famous Pie-shop, though why he chose to call his shop famous I never could ascertain. It was a little red-painted shop, with a number of bright patty-pans in the window, backed by a large yellow jug, and with blue belts round it, filled with stocks and wall-flowers. A furious jet of gas flamed, and fizzed, and whistled in the window, with a strangely twisted glass shield in front of it, to daze the eyes, and produce exaggerated estimates of the quantity of light in the minds of passers-by. But this was only at night. Our visit was of course in the daytime. Hung up behind the jug, there was always a large sheet of illustrations, representing certain wonderful feats performed at some circus in the neighbourhood. In Gerkin's window, too, was always announced the approaching benefit, at some remote place of entertainment, of the widow and five infant orphans of the late lamented Brother Muggeridge. Emblems of a mysterious and masonic character appeared in odd corners of the announcement bill, and Brother Buffaloes, whoever they might be, were entreated to be in time, and rally round the cause. The attractions were to be of a multifarious character: on this occasion only, Brother Cavendish was to appear in his celebrated rôle of the Unknown in the drama of the *Vampire of the Deep*, *Deep Sea*; Mrs Blanche Mortimer was going to sing (in character) *Auld Robin Gray*; there were to be dances, combats, performing-dogs, a laughable farce, and the play of the *Lass that loves a Sailor*.

Anxiety was beginning to be apparent in Podmore as we approached the pie-shop. His breath was short; his eyes were very wide open, and surpassingly brilliant; there were burning blushes on his cheeks; and he was incessantly twitching his curls into his eyes in a nervous way. All the time, he kept on increasing his speed, so that from a fast walk we were now drifting into a run.

'Had we not better pull up for five minutes, to consider a little, and put ourselves straight?' I suggested.

'I couldn't stop now for any money,' said Podmore. At length we were in front of the shop.

'Here it is,' whispered Pod rather tremulously. 'What do you think of it? I like their calling it plainly a pie-shop; don't you? Honest, isn't it? Better than pretending to be a pastrycook's.'

'Is that *her*?' I asked. We were not taught English grammar at Lexicon House. A young lady, with very shiny ringlets, a cameo-brooch, and a pink muslin dress, was behind a brass-railed counter, opening and shutting tin trap-doors, and producing very hot pies in compliance with the orders of two customers—small children, with rough hair and bad colds in their heads.

'Hush!'

We entered the shop. There were two or three enclosed benches and tables, shrouded by dull red curtains at the back. Beyond these was a glass-door, with thick green blots on the glass: through which we perceived Medlar, and made our way to him. I gave another glance at the pink muslin; she was smiling amiably, and even nodding at us. There was a glossy sallowness about her complexion that struck me as remarkable, and I wondered whether it was the result of unlimited pie-crust. We were soon in a very little room at the back of the shop, lighted in a curious way by a small window high up over the fireplace. I remember puzzling myself to think how the smoke from the fire was disposed of; but I had not much time for reflection. Podmore was scarlet in the face, twirling his cap round and round with extraordinary rapidity. Old Medlar was cutting thin bread and butter.

'Well, here we are! That's hearty. How are you? So you've come. Proud, I am sure. There's the tea on the hob brewing like mad. Are you peckish?'

'I've brought a bottle of currant-wine for you,' said Podmore falteringly.

'Have you, though? Well, that's good. I'm pertikler fond of currant-wine, I am; and so's Nan.'

'Is she indeed?' Podmore looked delighted at this unexpected coincidence. 'Well, then, I'm very glad I've brought it.' He ignored me altogether in the gift, I noticed, though tenpence of the cost of that wine was paid by me.

'My Nan will be down directly,' said Medlar, dragging up his three-cornered collars, and then rubbing his hands together with a violent cheerfulness. 'She's a cleaning herself—that's what she's doing on. Here—I'll go and hurry her.' He went out at a small door, and we could hear him mounting some loudly creaking stairs, and crying out at the top of his quavering, shrill voice: 'Nan, my lamb! Come along down. They're come; and the tea's brewed like anythink.'

'That isn't *her* in the shop, then,' I whispered to Podmore.

Podmore shook his head wildly.

'Is she Gerkin?'

But Podmore was lost in thought, staring hard at the ceiling, which was papered as though it had been a wall, with a combined trellis-work, honey-suckle, and cockatoo pattern.

'Why isn't it called Medlar's Pie-shop?'

'It isn't his,' Podmore answered sharply; 'he's only put in to work it. He does the outdoor work; she'—he pointed to the pink muslin—'the counter; and Nancy'—

'The cooking?' He nodded assent, and then returned to the ceiling.

I gave a glance round the room, at the tallow-faced Dutch clock; at the crowd of cheap crockery ornaments on the mantel-piece—sheep, poodle-dogs, swans, ducks, and shapeless shepherds with blue coats and muddled features; at the crumpled chimney-sweep, cut out of black velvet; and the other vague figure, intended for a Scotchman, and composed of small shells and sea-weed. Then I looked at the curious

engravings in black-wood frames which decked the walls—portraits of Hyder Ali, General Wolfe, Prince Poniatowski, and Queen Charlotte; a scene from the *Idle Apprentice*; and a penny-plate of Mr Sinclair in his celebrated character of Apollo; and a rough representation of Mr Turpin, the highwayman, leaping his black mare over a toll-bar, and pointing a pistol at the keeper. Medlar re-entered.

'She'll be here directly; all right. Let's begin. Here's the tea;' and he took a black earthenware tea-pot, with a mutilated spout, off the hob. 'You like sugar? I should think so. Here you are.' A blue basin, with some very dark-brown sugar, was dragged out of a little cupboard in the wall. 'Bread and butter; hot toast; *sprims* too; don't they smell delicious? Now, this 'ere is comfort, and no mistake at all about it.'

Suddenly, a door banged, and there was the noisy entrance of some one into the door. I kicked Podmore under the table, and looked up.

'Come along, Nan, and pour out the tea; we've been waiting ever so.'

'All right, governor,' said a deep voice, of rather uncultivated *contralto* quality; and a massive figure, clothed in dim black satin, struggled round between the table and the wall, and reached the tea-pot. With a strong, full-coloured hand she gave it a vigorous twirl once, twice, in the air—was it for luck, or to add further flavour to the tea?—and then dashed the beverage into the cups. I did not dare to look at Podmore; in fact, I could not take my eyes off Nan, but I could hear him breathing heavily.

'Now, then—fust come, fust serve.' Spoonfuls of the dark-hued sugar were plumped into our cups, and our portions of tea were set down suddenly before us.

'Sharp's the word, and quick's the action!' cried Nan loudly. 'Father, give us the bread and butter; I'm awful famished.'

She seized two slices, slapped them together briskly, folded them again, and then thrust the whole packet into a capacious mouth.

'Bother your thin! Give us the loaf. I like it thick—not all butter and cutlery.' She cut a slice according to her taste. 'You don't often get such a tightener as this at school, I should think, by the looks of you,' she said, turning to me.

I heard Podmore coughing; his tea was taking wrong turnings, and choking him.

She was not beautiful—I may say that at once. She had a very fat, florid, good-natured face, with merry little twinkling blue eyes; rather scanty fair hair, parted on one side; and a fine collection of chins. Her figure, geometrically speaking, I might describe as rhomboidal. She was entirely unrectangular, and must have been equally proportioned as regards length and breadth. Had she been of equestrian habits, she must have certainly required the cob we see so often advertised as quite up to thirteen stone. She wore a cap with cherry ribbons, and on her ample bosom reposed a portrait of a hard-staring gentleman, with full brown whiskers, and a curl on his forehead.

'Have some sugar on your bread and butter?' she said to Podmore. 'Do—I know you'll like it.' Medlar was hard at work at the 'sprims'; he had resigned the task of doing the honours to Nan, and was devoting himself to the pleasures of the table. Nan imbibed her tea with noisy, gulping sounds, but with evident relish. She became greatly good-tempered.

'Well, and which of you two young uns is going to marry me?' she cried, with a hearty laugh. 'I'm a widder. Why don't you perpose? Shall I marry the two of you, or will you toss? I've got four children, but the youngest is older than you, and all on 'em earns their own crusts; so you can't call them encumbrances.' She attacked the thin bread and butter again, folded up two more slices, and disposed of them in her old way.

'Please, I don't think I'm quite well.'

Podmore rose, very pale indeed. He secured his cap.

'You're never going?' cried Nan.

'Please, I'd better. We shall be late; shan't we, Skin?'

'Yes, I'm afraid we shall.'

'Lor', here's a pity, just as we're getting on so nice!'

'And the currant-wine?' Medlar cried out anxiously.

'Please, we'll leave that. Good-bye.'

'Here, my little Trojans, give us a kiss: bless you both! and here, and here;' and Nan flew into the shop, to return quickly, and thrust into our hands large three-cornered gooseberry-tarts.

'Have a glass of *erub* before you start?' Medlar had confused notions about us evidently.

'Get out, father; don't poison the children.'

I have just a memory of the pink muslin nodding her shiny ringlets about, and smiling with an oily cordiality; of Medlar returning to *sprims* in the background; of Nan standing out in her black satin on the pavement, waving kind red hands after us. We walked on quickly, but silently, tarts in hand; then we commenced running hard, still not speaking. We ran until we were quite breathless; then we stopped. I began to laugh, quietly at first, then loudly and heartily. Podmore joined, but his mirth was not unrestrained.

'Don't laugh, Skin,' he said—'there's a good fellow; it was a mistake, that was all.'

'You don't love her now?' He shook his head.

'It was a mistake.'

'She's not quite the princess in the *Arabian Nights*.'

'Well, she isn't.'

'What fun it was!'

'Now, don't laugh—there's a good Sky; and—and—'

'You won't mention it to any one, will you?'

'Never.'

'Be sure you don't, and I'll give you all my marbles; and we must keep Medlar quiet, and not let any one know anything at all about it. Mind, that's a bargain; and now, let's run on again.'

I have kept the secret a long time—as long as possible; and here it is at last.

## ARTIFICIAL PEARLS.

THE art of making false pearls is of very ancient origin, having been practised, as we are informed by Roman writers, before the Christian era, by the Arab tribes who followed the business of fishing for pearls along the sandy shoals of the Red Sea. These people had observed that the pearl-bearing oyster will, when diseased or wounded, exude from its body a juice which exhibits, when hardened and consolidated, a considerable degree of lustre and iridescence; and turning this observation to practical account, they contrived to make the pearl-oysters themselves their agents in the fabrication of artificial pearls. The methods which they employed for this purpose were, according to Apollonius, as follows: In the first place, oil was poured upon the water, to render the surface calm and smooth, and thus the more readily to induce the oysters to rise. When the poor mollusks, deceived by the apparent stillness of the water, rose to the surface to inhale the genial air, they were seized by the fishermen, who, thrusting a sharp instrument through the gaping valves into the soft body of the animal, threw it into an iron cullender, which was connected with a pan or trough, into which the exuding juices slowly trickled in the form of round pearly drops, or beads.

If the Arab fishermen of old did really practise the artifice ascribed to them, they hit upon a curious fact in the economy of nature, which, seventeen hundred years later, was re-discovered by the great naturalist of Sweden. In the year 1761, Linnaeus informed his government, that by a prolonged course,

of observations and experiments, he had discovered the only true and infallible method of fabricating genuine pearls, and was ready, for a certain sum of money, to benefit his country by divulging the secret. The Swedish government, however, did not avail itself of this offer, and the great naturalist subsequently sold his secret for 500 ducats to a merchant of Gothenburg, named Bagge, whose heirs offered it for sale, carefully sealed up, in the year 1780. This secret had, however, long before been made universally accessible by Linnæus himself, who, in the fifth edition of his *Systema Naturæ*, had expressed his conviction that the formation of pearls was due to injury inflicted on the shell or body of the animal. Subsequently, he indeed made a mystery of the whole matter, and refused to explain to his friend Beckmann, who questioned him on the subject, how he had obtained the pearls which were exhibited in his private collection, and stated by him to be the genuine but forced production of freshwater pearl-muscles. While Linnæus was vainly endeavouring to draw the attention of his compatriots to the practicability of making these native mollusks fabricate pearls to order, the Chinese had for ages been carrying on a well-organised system of manufacturing pearls on the same principles of forced muscle labour. According to the account of the Celestials themselves, the originator of the methods which they employed was a native of Hutchefu, named Ye-jin-yang, who lived in the thirteenth century of our era; and whose memory had long been honoured by those who practised his art, by the performance, at stated periods, of various ceremonial acts of respect in a temple specially dedicated to him. It would appear that there still exists an extensive manufacture of these forced pearls in the neighbourhood of Canton and at Hutchefu, near Ningpo, where several thousand men are annually employed in this extraordinary business. In April and May, the full-grown muscles of the year are removed one by one from their beds, and provided with the moulds or matrices that are to serve as the nuclei for new pearls. This is effected by inserting a piece of wire, or a few metal beads, between the mantle and shell of the animal, and leaving these foreign bodies embedded in the soft muscular substance of the living mollusk, until they become completely incrustated with a thin coating of nacre, or mother-of-pearl. A year is generally found to afford ample time for the completion of these incrustations; but occasionally, the muscles are left undisturbed for a longer period, in order to obtain a thicker deposit of the mother-of-pearl. The beads which are procured by this method often exhibit considerable lustre; but as they are always misshapen, in consequence of the matrix being attached at some one point to the body of the animal, they can only be used with opaque settings, or in embroidery, where the imperfect side can be concealed.

The chief purpose, however, to which this process is applied, is in the manufacture of the small idols with which the Chinese adorn their caps. These little figures, which to a casual observer appear to be entirely formed of a lustrous substance resembling the genuine pearl, consist of concavo-convex tin moulds, which have been covered with a thin coating of mother-of-pearl within the living body of the muscle. Although this covering, which gains additional lustre from the reflection of the tin below it, is excessively thin, the continuity of its parts is so great, that it is difficult to remove any portion of it without fracturing the whole. Several of the moulds are inserted in each valve of the muscle; and as these idols can consequently be produced at a trifling cost of time or money, they are sold at a very low rate, the price being usually about a penny for one large, or two ordinary sized figures. If Chinese ingenuity could devise a method for obtaining perfectly round

beads, the muscles would monopolise the entire manufacture of artificial pearls; but under the present condition of the art in China, it cannot compete with the results of European science; yet, notwithstanding its secondary practical importance, the method adopted by the Chinese is of considerable value when considered from a scientific point of view, since it affords convincing evidence of the accuracy of the opinion now generally held by chemists and physiologists, that the genuine pearl owes its origin to an abnormal condition of the parent mollusk, by which the natural fluids of the body become diverted from their legitimate purposes.

The Venetians were the first European people who turned their attention to the manufacture of false pearls; but although they may have borrowed the idea from their eastern co-traders, they did not follow the methods employed in Asia, but adopted a purely artificial mode of procedure, which consisted in injecting hollow white glass-beads with variously tinted varnishes, into whose composition mercurial preparations entered largely. This manufacture must have been brought early to a great degree of perfection, since laws were passed by the Venetian republic at the close of the fifteenth century, to stop the sale of these pearls on the ground that it was fraudulent to make or to sell beads which could not be distinguished from genuine oriental pearls. Notwithstanding these attempted restrictions, the art flourished, and Murano, which was the original seat of the manufacture, has continued till our own times to be the principal locality for the production of artificial or seed pearls, and for the glass-beads known in trade as 'Venetian beads.' Rome has long boasted of similar manufactures, but the materials employed by the Roman artificers are different; instead of glass, they use pieces of alabaster, which, after being turned in the form of small beads, are covered with a cement which is chiefly made up of pounded mother-of-pearl. But admirable as are some of the best specimens of Venetian beads and Roman pearls, they will not bear comparison with French artificial pearls, some exquisite samples of which were exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1855, that in point of lustre, water, and colour, could not be distinguished from oriental pearls, when the two were laid side by side. There is one property, however—and that is specific weight—which science has failed to impart to artificial pearls. When weighed in a balance with genuine oriental pearls, their relative lightness betrays their character; but in all other particulars, they are able to stand the test of outward examination and comparison with true pearls.

The French mode of fabricating pearls is believed to have originated about 1680 with a maker of rosaries (*patentrier*) called Jacquin. On one occasion, while walking in the garden of his country-house at Paris, his attention was attracted by the silvery lustre of a basin of water in which a number of bleaks had been washed; and perceiving that the effect was due to the presence of minute particles of the scales of the fish, he conceived the idea of employing these membranes as a coating to glass-beads. He found, however, on putting the idea into practice, that the scales decayed too rapidly to be accumulated in any considerable quantity, and for a long time he was unable to discover any agent for preserving them which did not destroy their lustre. The happy thought at length struck him to throw them into a strong alkaline solution, and he thus obtained the mixture, which, under the name of *Essence d'Orient*, has, since his time, constituted the characteristic element in the fabrication of artificial pearls in France. The *Cyprinus alburnus*, or bleak, is a small white fish common in many places, and especially abundant in the small streams flowing into the Seine and Marne. The scales, after being well washed in clear water, are compressed between folds of fine linen, and the fluid



which trickles from them repeatedly filtered till it acquires the necessary degree of purity, when it is mixed with some alkaline solution, the precise nature and proportions of which vary in different houses. From seventeen to eighteen thousand fish are said to be required for obtaining one pound of the pure essence.

Much of the success to which the best manufacturers have now attained depends upon the perfection of the glass-rods from which the beads are blown. The operation of blowing the glass-spheres is effected with such extreme rapidity, that a good workman can detach several thousand in the day for the ordinary kind of pearls; but where the beads are intended to imitate pearls of large size and value, the blower is obliged to proceed with more caution and slowness. When the bead presents the necessary degree of fusibility and roundness, the *Essence d'Orient*, mixed with a certain proportion of isinglass, is gently blown into it by means of a blowpipe. Although this part of the process converts the glass-sphere, as if by magic, into a lustrous pearl, much still remains to be done before it can be sent forth to try its chances of being mistaken for a gem of priceless value. After having been steeped in alcohol, and dried over a hot plate, the beads are filled with wax or cement, to give them weight and consistence, and carefully drilled and lined with slender tinted paper-tubes, to guard the thread on which they are to be strung from coming in contact with the wax. Lastly, an extra degree of lustre and water is imparted by exposing the beads to the action of the fumes of a mixture of bismuth and some mercurial preparation, the exact nature of which belongs to the secrets of the trade. Some manufacturers are said to wash or anoint each separate bead in a fluid obtained by the careful and repeated distillation of some mercurial compound.

The department of the Seine is still the principal seat of this branch of industry, which gives employment to a large number of artisans, the majority of whom are women; and as long as the manufacturers of the district continue to produce such beautiful specimens of their art, the scene of Jacquin's early labours is not likely to lose its ancient reputation of manufacturing the most perfect imitations of pearls.

#### 'A BUSINESS TO BE DISPOSED OF'

If we were to judge by the number of announcements to the above effect daily put forth in the newspapers, and by the extent and variety of the modes and methods by which, according to the representations of the parties concerned, a competence, an independence, even a great fortune is to be won, we might suppose that one of the easiest things in the world is for a man to set up in business, and turn any capital he may happen to possess into a source of permanent and competent income. Inquiries are constantly making for men of capital, either large or small, from men of twenty thousand pounds to men of twenty pounds without the thousand, and to all and each the same prize is held out—a return for their capital which shall place them, if already in easy circumstances, in the lap of luxury itself; or, if struggling with the world, above the necessity of struggling any longer. How any man, in the face of so many invitations to become rich and prosperous, should choose to continue foot-balling with poverty, and condescending to all manner of paltry shifts to make both ends meet, is a problem that may very well puzzle those who have the good-fortune to be quiet spectators of the battle of life. Who would be poor when so many facilities for being comfortably off are open to all, and are actually going a-begging in the morning papers? Why don't the crowds of people who are always wanting to settle in life, or to improve their position in life, come forward and close with these promising offers, and be prosperous and comfortable? The question is

reasonable enough. Let us see what sort of an answer experience will furnish. We will cite a few witnesses, who shall speak for themselves—not imaginary cases, be it clearly understood, but *'bona-fide'* travellers, as the phrase goes, through the miry ways of the world, who will 'nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice,' but depone to what they know, of their own knowledge, in a plain way.

Says the first witness—a hatter in the Borough—'When I was a lad, and had just left school, I was apprenticed to the trade I now follow under a very worthy master in my native place. I served some years to the business, and learned it as well as it is to be learned in a provincial town. The death of my parents left me master of a thousand pounds, or thereabouts, when I was out of my time. I came up to London, as a matter of course, intending to return after a month's holiday, and settle where my father had settled before me. But a month in the metropolis altered my mind: there was so much more to be seen and learned there than among my plodding neighbours at home, that there I resolved to stay and take up my abode. I was on the point of marriage, and commenced the search for a house, with a view of opening shop. The search was long, and not very successful. While skimming the columns of a newspaper for "Houses to Let," I chanced to come upon an advertisement of a "business to be disposed of," precisely of the kind I was seeking to establish. This, I thought, would do as well, or better, than an empty house. I went to the spot indicated, and found a respectable shop in a tolerable neighbourhood, not far from the City Road. The proprietor had valid reasons for wishing to dispose of what he averred was a thriving business, and, indeed, shewed to be such by entries in his books. I was an inexperienced lad, under twenty-three, and eager to settle, and I struck the bargain without more ado, paying two hundred and fifty pounds for the good-will, and three hundred for the stock and implements of the workshop. Within a month from that day, I was married, and had brought my wife to London. We were not long in finding out that the money I had paid for good-will had been paid for nothing, and that I had been robbed to that extent. Inquiries among the neighbours and among the members of the trade subsequently opened my eyes to the character of the hoax of which I had been the victim. My predecessor, though he had been in the house nearly two years, had carried on scarcely any retail trade; he worked largely for the wholesale houses, with whom he had a good connection—and every now and then he sold his shop and his good-will, and removed to another place. He had done the same thing six or seven times before he had fallen in with me, and was, in fact, a systematic dealer in an article which, in his case, did not exist—the connection which I had bought under the name of good-will being the next thing to a nonentity. He must of course have "cooked" his accounts for my examination. I tried the place for two years, in the vain attempt to make a business; and had ultimately to lay out my wife's little fortune in the purchase of the lease of a house in a more eligible thoroughfare, before I could see a reasonable prospect of making provision for a family.'

Says the second witness—'I am a bookseller; I have stood behind a bookseller's counter since I was fourteen years old, and am as good a living catalogue of books, though I say it myself, as perhaps you will find in the Row. When I first came to London, twenty years ago, I bought a snug little second-hand business of a man who had reared it and lived upon it many years. I thought myself too wide-awake to be caught in anybody's trap, and used every caution before I paid the purchase-money that the oldest hand in business could have used. I went over the stock carefully, and paid for it at a fair valuation, and gave certainly not a farthing more for the good-will

than it was worth. Further, I bound the vendor not to open against me within a mile of the shop, east, west, north, or south. I was even congratulated on my bargain by my friends, who all thought I had done well for myself, and praised me accordingly. I was perfectly satisfied, and hugged myself with the idea of the respectable standing I had secured. All went on as it should do for a fortnight, but in the third week there came a lawyer's letter demanding two and a half years' rent, and threatening immediate execution if the sum were not paid. Here was a thunderbolt. Like lightning, I set off to the lawyer, carrying with me the receipts of my predecessor for his rent up to the last quarter, and demanded an explanation. "You don't mean to say," said he, "that you have bought Folio's business, and paid the money?"

"I do," said I, "and I mean to keep it."

"Really," said the lawyer, "this is too bad. Here, Tapper (calling to his clerk), shew this young man how the business stands." And the lawyer left the room.

"Tapper took me in hand, and with a self-possession which I envied, but could not imitate, opened my eyes to the facts of the case. It came out that the house which I occupied at the rent of a hundred a year was sublet—that though old Folio had regularly paid his rent to the holder of the lease, the owner of the house had not received a farthing for nearly three years. Of the fact of the subletting I had never been aware, and now it was expected I would pay the deficits of the villain leaseholder. When the lawyer returned, I expostulated on the cruelty and injustice of the threatened execution; but that availed nothing; he was eloquent on the hardness of my case, but impenetrable as a rock as to my obligation. I left him, determining to get a wagon and carry off my shopful of books that night; but this resolution came too late—when I got home, I found a man in possession: the lawyer had, in fact, despatched him to my shop while Tapper was explaining the state of the case. The end of it all was, that I was sold up, and had to begin the world again."

Says the third witness—"I was an usher in a country school, where I had received my own education from boyhood, and where I had remained at the persuasion of the master in the capacity of his assistant. The life of an usher is not all sweets, and ten years of it was as much as suited my constitution. At the end of that time, I had saved a little money; and with that in my pocket, I came up to London, seduced by sundry announcements of schools to be disposed of, resolving to purchase one, if it were to be found, that promised a fair chance of success. I wrote to one advertiser, who offered a day-school bringing in L.150 a year for the sum of L.100—thinking I might economise even on such an income, and confident that I should improve the school. He appointed a meeting at a coffee-shop in Snow Hill, and at the hour mentioned he made his appearance in the shape of a rather wild-looking Irishman, in a bewildered sort of costume, which had the look of being dug out from a heavy superincumbent mass for that special occasion. He addressed me in Latin, pronounced through the Hibernian medium, and only condescended to English when I informed him that I was not an ancient Roman. This was not intended for a compliment, but he received it as such, and went on in his native brogue to inform me that he had graduated at "Trinity," and might have had a tutorship in a noble family, had it not been that by the time he had his degree he was privately married, and in a fair way of having a noble family of his own. We left the coffee-house together, to proceed to his establishment. He had appointed Wednesday afternoon, because that was a holiday for the boys. His wife, with three bouncing children, stood expecting us at the parlour-window of a small twenty-pound house in a back-street in Somers Town. The school-room was the

front-kitchen, and the boys found their way to it down the area steps. There were seventy of them altogether—how they were ever crammed into it, I could not conceive—they paid from threepence to eightpence a week each, making about thirty shillings, if they all paid. The remainder of the income was made up by the proceeds of an evening-school, for bigger lads and girls; by letter-writing for the poor of the district; and by the measuring of masons' work, and the auditing of accounts for the labourers and small tradesmen of the neighbourhood. The pupils were chiefly the sons of bricklayers and masons, then employed in building the miles of streets now so densely populated; and the schoolmaster acknowledged that most of them might leave when the building was done. He evidently thought that he was offering me a decided bargain, and was chagrined beyond measure when I declined it, wondering aloud where I was likely to meet with a better investment.

"I subsequently purchased a school in a London suburb, commenced by a man who had rushed into the scholastic profession as a refuge from distress. But he found that he was incapable of its duties, and he had the honesty to tell me so. He did not tell me, however, what he knew just as well, that the most influential men of the parish were about establishing an educational institution, after the university model. I found that out three months after my duties commenced, when, out of my forty boys, twenty-five brought me notice to quit. I fought a hard battle for three years with the new so-called university, and was only finally put to the rout when all my means were exhausted."

Says the fourth witness—"I inherited from my father, a Lancashire merchant, a moderate fortune, and a sleeping partnership in a firm which had prospered for near a century. Unhappily, the affairs of the firm went wrong a few years ago; I had to meet my share of the responsibility, and my fortune suffered to a considerable amount. At this time, my family were growing up around me, and I judged it expedient to establish my eldest son, whom I had intended for Oxford, in some way of business, the gains of which might compensate him for the fortune of which calamity had deprived us. A house of some standing in London advertised for a partner who could bring five thousand pounds into the concern. I wrote to the advertiser, and on learning the real address of the parties, who bore the reputation of men of honour and credit, felt perfectly satisfied that in treating with them there was nothing to fear. I ran up to town, called upon my attorney, was closeted with the partners, and went over the examination of their affairs. The investigation confirmed their statements. Their business had latterly increased to a considerable extent, and they appeared to want an additional partner, as well as additional capital, to carry it on. I sent for my son: the partnership deeds were drawn out and signed, and the money paid—the five thousand, and five hundred in addition, on account of recent accumulations. I returned home, well pleased at the successful settlement of the business, and at the position my boy had assumed at the very outset of life. For a few months, all went on well; then my son's letters referred to ill-natured rumours which had reached him, then to suspicions that had crept into his own mind, and at length he urgently requested my presence. I lost no time in again repairing to town, and to his private dwelling. He was by this time fully aware of the trap into which we had been betrayed. The increase of business, of which the firm had boasted, was not a natural increase, but had been brought about by the unsound speculations of an elder partner, who had added to their usual agency-trade a manufacturing establishment, the cost of whose machinery had involved them in difficulties. It was to meet the bills given for this machinery that the L.5500 were wanted; but the manufactory was mostly



standing idle, and when worked, was worked at a loss, because not a single member of the firm had a practical acquaintance with the details of the manufacturing processes. The credit of the firm was staggering under demands already made upon it, and demands still heavier were to be looked for, unless the manufacture were given up. The partners, at a private meeting, had proposed selling it, and had hinted that my son might have it a bargain, and, with a few thousands of additional capital, might work it to advantage. A meeting of the firm next morning made us aware that this was not only the best thing, but the sole thing to be done, unless we submitted to a composition or a bankruptcy. As nothing better was to be had, I took the factory and all its machinery, and withdrawing my son's name from the firm, started him on an independent footing. Those results followed which a practical man would have foretold: the boy, unused to the business, was obliged to intrust its management to others, and never in a single instance realised by the goods produced the cost of materials and labour. The premises had to be shut up at the end of six months' ruinous experiment, and the machinery sold off by auction. I lost L.3300 by the sale of the stock, and L.600 more by a half-year's experiments in manufacture. The sum I had paid into the firm sufficed to release them from their embarrassments, and bolster up their credit; and having got rid of the untoward speculation that weighed them down, they were able to carry on their trade on the old system without a new partner. I and my family are, in all, L.4000 the poorer for that "eligible opportunity."

Says a fifth witness—"I am a widow. The death of my husband, who was a clerk in a mercantile house, placed me under the necessity of seeking the means of support for myself and children. "A business to be disposed of" appeared the only thing likely to meet my necessities. I had a small fund of savings—not much—and, in the hopes of finding what I wanted, I commenced an industrious search, guided as well by the newspapers as by the placarded notices in shop-windows. Most of the businesses thus obtainable that came within my humble means were those of tobacconists; and the result of my inquiries among their proprietors was the unvarying information—never withheld in a single case—that the major portion of the business of the week was transacted on the Sunday. If, as I sometimes did, I expressed my intention of closing the shop on a Sunday—"then," said the shopkeeper, "this will never do for you; you might as well keep it closed altogether." The same information met me at the news-shop—they sold more newspapers on a Sunday than on any other day in the week, and in some places more than in all the other days put together. "A news-shop," said one woman, "and not open on Sunday—the notion is ridiculous." As my ridiculous notions shut me out of the tobacco and the news trades, I resorted to a confectioner, who offered, for a hundred pounds, to hand me over his stock and his lease. He professed to clear three guineas a week profit on the average. "But you do not open on Sunday?" said I. "Don't I?" he retorted. "I sometimes sell a hundred dozen o' walnuts of a Sunday afternoon; and in the summer, no end of lemonade and ginger-beer, let alone the tarts and sweet-stuffs." That would not do, and I turned my attention to the small stationers. Here I was met by a different tale: there was no Sunday trading, but neither was there any other trading by which a living was to be got. "The utmost you can expect," said one, "from the shop is to make your rent. If you look for more, you will be disappointed: if a woman has a small income, or a husband to work for her, it is very well to keep a little shop like this, but it's no use to expect to make a living of it." I prosecuted my inquiries still further. Had I been vile enough to pander to evil purposes, or to close my eyes and my

heart to the obligations of decency and morality, I might have made a home for my children—in the lap of vice; but how could I do that? I have given up the search at last, and have come to the conclusion, that businesses are disposed of because it is desirable to dispose of them, and not because it is desirable to have them."

The above testimonies may be thought sufficient for our purpose. As, however, they are all on one side of the question, and the question has another side, which ought in fairness to be represented, we shall call another witness, and hear what he has to say.

Says the sixth witness—"I have no complaint to make at all—quite the contrary. When I came to London, thirty years ago, I did so because I was tired of a small town, that presented but a paltry field to work upon. I wanted more room for activity, and was determined to have it. I had a decent capital, as I thought, though it wasn't five hundred pounds, and I brought my family up to town to see what I could do with it. For more than a month I was looking about for a house in a good spot for business. I had fixed my mind upon a particular line of road; but there every house was already occupied. Among the rest was a dingy, half-blind looking shop, where a few dusty boots and shoes lay untouched in the window from one week's end to another. I had my suspicions that the shopkeeper was out of heart; and I carefully watched the house daily to see if any symptoms of change appeared. At last I caught the man one morning in the act of sticking in his window the usual notice—"This business to be disposed of." I walked in, and in a few minutes he had promised me the refusal of the purchase. He had boots, leather, and stock of various sorts to get rid of, to the extent of half my capital. They were of no use to me, who never worked in leather; but I bought them all for the sake of getting his lease into the bargain; and though I had to sell them at a loss of 40 per cent. I secured by that outlay the position I wanted. I knew that the goods I dealt in would suit the neighbourhood—and I was right. In less than three years, I was making L.500 a year. At the end of that term, I enlarged the shop to the utmost practicable extent, and doubled my business and profits. I might retire now if I chose, and should do so did I not find more pleasure in business than in abandoning it. My children have taken its burdens from me, but I choose still to retain the supervision, for the sake of employment, which I have been too long accustomed to, to be able to relinquish."

Thus we see that the conclusion of the widow, quoted above, however just in the main, is not the whole truth. It may be that what it is desirable that one man should dispose of, it is equally desirable that another should obtain. It occurs continually in affairs of this kind, that where one branch of trade would decline and die out for want of custom, another better suited to the wants of the surrounding inhabitants, or of the tens of thousands who pass up and down in the course of the day, will prosper vigorously. A shrewd discrimination is always necessary in the conduct of business in London; and in nothing is it more necessary for a beginner, who can have no reputation to induce customers to seek him out, than in the choice of a situation. Strangers and beginners are not always sufficiently aware of this; on the other hand, there is in London a class of persons so perfectly alive to the advantages of position, that they make merchandise of it, and deal in it all their lives long. These are, for the most part, manufacturers, purveyors, or wholesale dealers in shop-goods; following the example of the brewers, who invariably anticipate opposition by establishing their own taverns in new neighbourhoods, they take possession of the best business situations as they arise, and opening their shops, nurse the young trade until it has become self-sustaining. It is now a 'business to be disposed of,'

and may be, and often is, disposed of at a double profit, inasmuch as the incoming tenant not only pays for the stock and good-will, but enters into a covenant to sell for a certain term of years no other goods than those supplied by the vendor of the business—a condition which is perhaps accepted in return for credit or accommodation of a pecuniary kind. Transactions of this sort may be fair and honest enough; but in all such cases the purchaser should have his wits about him, and weigh the matter well ere he sets his hand to the bargain.

## THE BATEMAN HOUSEHOLD,

AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM.

CHAPTER XXI.—FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

UNLESS one is a lady and his lover, one does not, generally speaking, rush into the arms of a dear friend whom we have not seen for three or four years, as we might do if we had been only apart from him for the same number of weeks. Though we have written to him ever so often—and men do not correspond regularly with men, unless in the way of business—we find it impossible throughout so protracted a period to keep our affection for him as fresh as at parting. He has had experiences of joy and of sorrow, wholly different from ours in the meantime, and we suspect with reason that those must have more or less moulded his character. He is not, in short, the same man. It is impossible, we find, to take up the familiarity dropped so long ago, and to resume it at the same point, as though there had been no interval. Sir Charles Ryder, Baronet, Magistrate of the County, Custos Rotulorum, and what not, could not be expected to meet Robert Marsden, late carpenter and builder, and finder of piratical treasure, as Ryder had been wont to meet Marsden after a six weeks' absence from Teesdale How. And yet he welcomed the black-bearded, sunburnt man to Rudesleigh with hearty earnestness, and bade him make his home there, among old friends, as long as he liked. 'There is one in particular, in that chamber,' he added smiling, and pointing to the boudoir window as they stood on the hall-steps, 'by whom your welcome should be first given.' By which speech (which was not extemporaneous by any means) he put an end at once to what might otherwise have been a subject of unpleasant reserve between them.

Marsden had arrived so early, that it was not yet breakfast-time, and he had half an hour's undisturbed conversation with Ellen before that meal, at which he sat down with her for the first time as her accepted lover; a fact which Mr Onslow Bateman acceded to with his accustomed serenity. Perhaps it was that in that delicious interview the dear girl had put the exile in possession of all the more important facts which had taken place during his absence—although our own opinion is that she never said a word about them; or perhaps he was only actuated by the not uncommon perversity which prompts long-absent persons to talk of the things that happened to them quite recently—of the new line of railway they yesterday travelled by (well known to all their auditors for years), and of the man on the gray horse who took off his hat to them just before they drove in at the lodge-gates—rather than of what is new, and strange, and interesting to their friends; but, at all events, Marsden's topic of conversation was not his own antipodal experiences, but the excellence of the *Vampire* newspaper. He had bought a copy as he got into the night express, and 'was indebted to it for having put an end to the somewhat melancholy feelings which visiting the dear old places in Cumberland had engendered.'

'In Cumberland! Why, how came you there?' inquired Florence with astonishment.

'Really, my dear Miss Florence, I do not think

you need to wonder that, since the opportunity was offered, I should spend one day among the places with which, hitherto at least—here he bowed to the younger sister—the pleasantest period of my life has been associated.'

'Hear, hear,' observed Mr Onslow Bateman approvingly. 'It is certain that Marsden has been a member of the Australian senate.'

'I think you might have come here first, nevertheless,' said Ellen Bateman, with the prettiest possible pout of her red lips: 'you ought to have been thinking of nothing else but coming here.'

'That was just the case,' responded Marsden gallantly; 'I actually *could* think of nothing else; and the way seemed long indeed this morning until I bought the *Vampire*. It seems a very remarkable print.'

'Seems, my dear sir; it is,' observed Mr Hardy Wentworth, in the accents of Mr Charles Kean.

'It must at least have some extremely clever contributors,' continued Marsden, feeling in the pockets of his shooting-coat for the paper in question.

'I am glad to see your critical acumen has not been impaired by life in the bush, my dear friend,' remarked Mr Bateman gravely: 'you have no such newspapers in that part of the world, I reckon.'

'No, indeed; nothing of the sort,' assented Marsden. 'Of course, we have plenty of scurrility, but none of this elegant malice, this educated Billingsgate.'

Ryder put down his knife and fork, and laughed until the tears came into his eyes. 'We take in a couple of copies, my dear fellow, here: there are two duplicates of what you hold in your hand in that very post-bag yonder. Some of us at Rudesleigh have a very great admiration for that journal, I assure you.'

'And no wonder,' observed Marsden, still quite unconscious of the existence of a personal interest in any of his auditory concerning the subject under discussion. 'Why, just read this review, for instance, upon the last "success" in literature, a novel called *Anne Chisholm*.'

'Bless my soul and body!' ejaculated little Miss Ryder, and that so vehemently that all eyes were at once turned towards that lady, who was, however, luckily, a good deal obscured by the urn. 'I really beg your pardon, Mr What's-your-name, but I upset the milk, and it gave me quite a turn.'

'I hope that that will not be reciprocal, madam,' observed Mr Onslow Bateman with a bow; for he always bowed when he made a *jeu d'esprit*, in order that the world should not be a loser through its inattention.

'Well,' continued Marsden, 'this unfortunate book is handled worse than Izaak Walton treated worms. It is written by a woman, it seems, and that gives opportunity for a pretence of delicacy on the part of the critic, which, considering that he is in reality as coarse as he can be, is exceedingly humorous. He remarks that ladies' maids and governesses can hardly ever be judges of good society.'

'There is a felicitous suggestiveness about that I like amazingly,' observed Hardy Wentworth.

'Say rather a delicate blackguardism,' exclaimed Ryder indignantly. 'Pray, go on, and get it over. I had just as soon hear a detailed account of a case of wife-beating.'

'Oh, there is far too much of it to read,' replied Marsden; 'it's a shower of poisoned darts that lasts for ever so long, and some of which I should think the poor authoress would never get quite quit of. Indeed, it is sometimes altogether too bad. If, he concludes, it had not been understood that it was a woman and a young one who had written the volume, he would draw attention to certain portions of its contents, the purity of which is more than questionable. Now, he either ought to have quoted those or said nothing about them. That is a

sort of innuendo which would kill some female Keates, I suppose.'

'And as good a deed as drink if it did,' remarked Hardy Wentworth sullenly; 'we want no more young authors, and far less authoresses now-a-days.'

'You did not write the review yourself, Wentworth?' inquired Ryder gravely. 'Good: I am truly glad to hear it; and I may be therefore allowed to say that having read the book in question myself, with extreme interest and attention, that no such passages as are referred to exist therein at all; and that the innuendo conveyed in the notice is not only malicious and cruel, but a gratuitous lie.'

'I don't think it is likely to have been gratuitous,' remarked Mr Onslow Bateman, as the ladies left the table, turning, with his usual dexterity, what threatened to become an acrimonious discussion into an agreeable pleasantry. 'The fact is, my dear Marsden, Mr Wentworth and myself are connected with the paper that has had the good-fortune to please you. We are part-proprietors of the *Vampire*.'

'I need not ask, then, whether it is a paying concern, I hope?'

'Well, the fact is, it is and isn't,' replied Mr Hardy Wentworth with an excellent imitation of manly frankness. 'It is spoken highly of, quoted largely, and certainly commands some talent; but we are in want of a little capital—we had, in fact, not enough money to start with—and need some extra supervision at head-quarters. Verjuice has so many personal enemies that the paper makes no way where it is most important that it should do so. Now, if we could persuade Mr Onslow Bateman here to go up to town himself for a little, the *Vampire* would soon, I believe, become the *Phoenix*.'

'How much money would be requisite to set it flying again?' inquired Marsden, with some interest.

Ryder passed close by the last speaker, on his way out of the room, and as he passed, he whispered to him to take an old friend's advice, and keep his nuggets in his pocket. Marsden nodded, with the air of a man who has made his own money, and thoroughly understands the nature of every sort of commercial transaction, and then reiterated his question.

'How much money? Well, really,' said Wentworth, 'Cracker is general manager, and knows everything to a fraction. A thousand or two would, I suppose, keep us going for ever so long. Would it not, Bateman?'

'My dear sir,' responded that gentleman quietly, 'that entirely depends upon the sense you happen to attach to the expression "ever so long." My last five hundred pounds sufficed it for a fortnight; a couple of thousands would therefore extend over a couple of months.'

The lugubrious accents of Mr Onslow Bateman were not intended to produce melancholy in his auditor by any means, nor to depreciate the value of the *Vampire* as a literary property; nor did they have any such effect. It is not customary, it is true, for the sharers in any commercial venture to cry stinking fish, or to rate its value low to intending purchasers; but such a line has been taken once or twice with very considerable success. In that case, the judicious seller has nothing to reproach himself with, though the worst should come to the worst, and the buyer may at least congratulate himself that his credulity was never imposed upon. Marsden had a high opinion of the ex-tutor's keenness and judgment, was not averse to speculation, and more than all, had taken a violent fancy to the *Vampire*, which suited his purposeless nature very well. He found out, too, now that he had no occasion to work for his living, that he was not a little ambitious. 'If one gave substantial help,' said he, 'one would have a hand in the management, I suppose: the right of inserting a leader or two occasionally?'

'Well,' replied Mr Wentworth, 'I really cannot say; we must ask Verjuice, you see'—

'We will not ask Verjuice at all,' interrupted Mr Onslow Bateman hastily, and observing his old pupil's brow to darken; 'we don't want any "friend in the city" in such a matter as this. Yes, Marsden, you shall insert what you please, I promise you.'

'I'll think of it,' replied the young man, consulting his watch, and finding the time had arrived for a walk with his beloved object.

Mr Onslow Bateman accompanied the young couple to the hall-steps, not for the sake of blessing them, after the manner of a stage-parent, but because he wished to shake off Wentworth, and smoke his cigar in the bowling-green alone. Whenever this agreeable middle-aged gentleman was unwell or in bad spirits, he preferred to have his own company only to inflict himself upon, and we only wish many much better men of our acquaintance had a similar habit. This bowling-green was the most charming summer retreat that any philosopher could imagine, and it is one of the signs perhaps of our becoming less of philosophers that our bowling-greens are growing fewer and fewer. We do not speak of those miserable oblong fragments of torn turf which usurp that noble title upon sign-boards, and which, in the base companionship of a dry skittle-alley, allure persons behind public-houses who have scruples about getting drunk within doors; but those silent shaded spots which were once attached to half the country-houses of England, and devoted to Bias the sage. The Rudesleigh bowling-green was as smooth as its billiard-table, with grassy banks sloping up from its tiny fosses for spectators to recline upon, except on the south side, where there was a small but many-tinted flower-garden, and a little fountain which had once sustained a ball. This ball, however, had been removed at the request of the ex-tutor, who complained that it affected him uncomfortably, as a conjuror does of whose continuous success in ball-catching we have our doubts, and whose risk of failure makes us nervous—so sensitive was Mr Onslow Bateman's nature, even with respect to matters inanimate. It is possible, nevertheless, that upon this particular morning he could have borne even that anxiety, had the cause for it existed, for his mind was evidently engaged on other and probably more serious subjects. He paced slowly up and down the little gravel-terrace above the green, and under the great twelve-foot wall of yew that sheltered on all sides the bowling-green and garden from the winds, with his hands behind him, and his brow heavy with care. So immersed was he in thought that he did not hear the light step of his daughter Florence close behind him, nor even the first gentle 'Papa, dear' that she uttered. Her voice was always low and musical; but when she spoke to her father, it had a certain winning tenderness, which it was strange so delicate an ear as his had hitherto failed to notice.

'Papa, dear, you are sad, I fear,' said she, addressing him for the second time, and looking up at him with a wistful air in her large eyes. He stopped, and since it would have inconvenienced him to unclasp his hands, permitted her to salute his cheek; though, as a general rule, Mr Onslow Bateman did not much encourage demonstrative filial regard.

'If it isn't interrupting you, I want to have a little talk with you, papa.'

'Really, Florence,' observed Mr Bateman, drawing out his gold repeater, 'I have rather particular business very shortly.' He dignified luncheon by that title, because he was alarmed at her unusually serious tone, portending something unpleasant (a thing which he always hated to hear); and therefore, like a skilful general, he opened for himself a line of retreat at once, should retreat be advisable.

'I will only detain you a very few minutes, papa. Please—please do tell me what it is makes you sad?' Her whole face, nay, her very figure, leaning upon him in the attitude of a suppliant, pleaded for her; her heart, if he could have looked into it, pleaded



too for love and confidence, but he answered coldly enough: 'Tut, tut, Florence; is that all you want to say? I am not sad, nor even serious. I hope, as Mrs Quickly said, it isn't time to think of sad things yet. I wanted a game at bowls, and could get nobody to play with me, that was all. Now, I've got somebody, and am in spirits again. Come now, see; I will play with my feet, and you shall play with your hands, and yet I'll beat you.' He drew her down on to the green, and laughingly began to knock the balls about.

'Dear papa, I would so much rather you would talk to me a little.' Mr Onslow Bateman dropped his daughter's arm with an offended air. 'Do not be angry, please, with me; but I do love you so, if you would let me shew it. Will you sit with me on the bench there for five minutes?'

'For five minutes I will, Florence,' responded her father stiffly; 'but it is that description of garden-seat which I detest, with its back all knobs and points.'

Since there was so little time to be lost, Florence could not but be abrupt in her questions. 'Do you want any money, dear papa?'

Never in all his not uneventful life had Mr Onslow Bateman had so very plain and uncompromising an inquiry addressed to him. Even to his agile mind, no means of evasion presented themselves upon the instant, and he answered 'Yes,' as directly and straightforwardly as any vulgar person might have done.

'Would five hundred pounds be of any substantial service to you?'

This happened to be precisely the sum that Mr Bateman had borrowed of the young baronet, and which had since been sucked up by the *Vampire*; it was the loss of that money which at that moment, indeed, was so affecting him, not because of his inability to repay it, so much as that it absolutely left him without the means of proceeding to London, and there, as Wentworth had suggested, looking after the interests of the paper himself. He was so struck by his daughter's earnest manner, and so impressed by it with the conviction that she had really some practical help to offer, that he openly stated his present necessity and the reason of it.

'Then, my dear papa,' said she, producing a little parcel, and kissing him very tenderly, 'here is that sum, which I am glad indeed to be able to put at your disposal.'

'And who gave you that, my dear?' inquired Mr Onslow Bateman in astonishment.

'Nobody, dear papa. I earned it myself, unknown to every one except good kind Miss Ryder. I had rather have had you for a confidant, dear papa. But I never can work so again—never, never, again—although I wish for your sake that I could.' Large tears filled the poor girl's eyes, and coursed down the delicate cheeks, whose extreme paleness Mr Onslow Bateman now for the first time observed; dark rims had those eyes too, now he saw, and the beautiful face was looking altogether thin and haggard.

'What is it, my child?' said her father pitifully, touched in what was really a most tender heart, although there was in general far too little room in it for any sorrows save his own. 'I am quite in the dark about this work of yours, and the trouble which has come of it. I ought not to have been so, I feel'—

'Never mind, dear papa—never mind,' interrupted hastily the sobbing girl. 'I was sure you would feel for me when you did know. If it had not been that I saw you so grieved and anxious lately, and thought this money might be of some service, I would not have troubled you with my concerns at all.'

'What! not your own father?' said Mr Onslow Bateman, stroking her cheek, and speaking in a tone of playful reproach; 'would you not even have told him?'

'About the work, papa, yes; but not about the

pain that has come of it. That was only this morning, though. What dreadful, dreadful things that newspaper did say!'

'Whatever the work has been, my love,' said he, with his old laughing manner, 'it must, I fear, have a little affected your brain. I know of no dreadful newspaper. What do you mean?'—('She never could have sold five hundred pounds worth of crochet, surely,' thought Mr Bateman to himself, 'although it is surprising for what a time these women can go on at that.')

'The *Vampire*, papa, I mean. Did you not hear them talking of that horrid review in it at breakfast?'

'Yes, my dear, but— Goodness gracious, what a state you young people are put into by the misfortunes of others! I remember I used to be just as tender-hearted myself when I was young. That review will hurt nobody, you may take my word for it. If I had achieved such a success as the authoress of *Anne Chisholm*, I would have let the universal press of the United Kingdom salute me with their execrations, and welcome. It is a work of true genius, and no newspaper critic can either mend or mar such a thing as that.'

'O papa, but if you were a poor girl who had set her hope upon the result of that one venture; not for the sake of fame only—though that is something to the heart of the Young—but of honest independence, and the independence of others. Consider, I say, that poor girl's agony when she reads in a paper that is highly thought of and largely read, not ridicule of her humble attempt to gain a name for herself—for that may have been justified by her incapacity—not the fair open attack that every one who has the courage to publish should have the courage to face; but covert insults—suggestions too horrible to repeat, of what she had hinted here and suggested there, when she had meant nothing, as God knows, from beginning to end, but what was pure, and honest, and maidenly.'

Mr Onslow Bateman's face had grown very pale during this pitiful appeal, and his voice belied his words as he tried to utter gaily: 'You are making yourself unnecessarily anxious about this supposed young woman, Florence; she is doubtless on the wrong side of forty, and wears spectacles of neutral tint, my dear; and I have no doubt that she is writing another story at this moment, even better than the first.'

'Never, never,' exclaimed Florence bitterly; 'she will never expose herself to such a pen again. The dream of my life is over, for I have been awakened from it by far too cruel a hand. You said you liked *Anne Chisholm*, papa, and that word of yours, and this money—since it is of use to you—are the only pleasant associations I shall ever have with my first and last novel.'

'Did you write *Anne Chisholm*, daughter Florence?' asked he in a quavering voice. The same shadow of intense pain flitted momentarily over Mr Onslow Bateman's face as Ryder had observed there a few weeks before, and he murmured hoarsely: 'God forgive me, then, for it was your father who wrote that review.'

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN EMBARRASSMENT OF SUITORS.

Difficult as it is for the young aspirant after literary fame to get his torch lit at the sacred fire, when that is once accomplished, it is far more difficult to hide his candle under a bushel—to 'keep it dark' at all. Her secret being once out of the sole keeping of trusty Miss Ryder, Florence Bateman soon became identified with the authoress of *Anne Chisholm*, and produced the usual sensation among her friends. Some of them 'could never have believed it of her,' and 'never were so astonished in their lives;' but the great majority, with more of compliment, if less of truth, affirmed

that 'they had guessed it all along,' and, indeed, had each confided it, months ago—even in some cases before the work in question was published—but in the strictest confidence, to their dear friend, Mrs Harris. Miss Ryder recompensed herself for her long and unwilling reticence by following Florence whithersoever she moved with admiring eyes, and directing, by words and winks of intense significance, the attention of visitors to her talented *protégée*, as though the young lady had been a Unicorn, and she its fortunate proprietor. Ellen Bateman, who had laughed, a little scornfully perhaps, at her sister's devotion to literature, was not in the slightest degree envious at its results, but expressed her delight at it in an abundance of half-triumphant, half-penitential tears. She deemed her to be the greatest genius of either sex that this country had hitherto produced, reserving to herself, however, the conviction that had dearest Robert chosen to exert himself with pen and ink, there would have been a single exception. Mr Onslow Bateman—and this was the reward which Florence valued highest—became, from being rather a philosophic parent, one who seemed never sufficiently able to express his fatherly pride in her, although, notwithstanding his affectionate encouragement, she could not be persuaded to write another line; while Mr Hardy Wentworth—and this was her greatest triumph, perhaps, although she did not estimate it very highly—excepted for the future, in all his sweeping condemnations of the female sex (for whom he had a full measure of that contempt he entertained for everything) the modest and unobtrusive authoress of *Anne Chisholm*. The effects more or less produced by this discovery upon Robert Marsden and Charles Ryder were of such importance as to merit more particular description. The young baronet, since he perceived that the whole subject was distressing to her, had confined himself hitherto to a few words of congratulation, and was the least jubilant, to all appearance, over the young lady's success, of all. When preparation, however, began to be made for the departure of the ex-tutor for London, and the pleasant Rudesleigh household was at length upon the point of being broken up, Ryder solicited an interview with Florence Bateman, somewhat as the Earl of Essex, when most dutifully disposed, might have begged one of Queen Elizabeth. That nobleman would have carried on the subsequent conversation, however, we fancy, with a good deal more of ease and fluency, not to say passionate warmth, than did this bashful young gentleman. The meeting was held in the Bowling-green, as being a sequestered spot for such a purpose, and Sir Charles Ryder very nearly poisoned himself by the number of yew-berries which he plucked off the hedge and devoured in his nervousness.

'I am a stuttering, stammering donkey,' he began, suiting the action to the words, and blushing like a very magnificent crown-imperial; 'and it is possible, my dear Miss Florence, that had it not been for your approaching departure from Rudesleigh, I might never have broken silence at all. You are so much better and wiser than I, and now you are famous too, so that it seems more difficult for me than ever to address you. Indeed,' added the young man, stopping suddenly, 'I cannot now say, and never can, and never shall be able to say the words that I would wish at the right time.'

'My dear Sir Charles,' replied Florence with deep feeling, 'that is not quite true. I have not forgotten—I never shall forget—that on the unhappy morning when this wretched book of mine—which I wish from the bottom of my heart had never been written—was so cruelly spoken of in that Paper, you, and you alone, stigmatised the harshness and untruth of what was said of it with the eloquence that is born only of a kind heart and an honest mind. That you liked my book, was, and is a thing very cheering

to me, but that you spoke as you did, of your own knowledge of the falsehood of the charge brought against it, was a comfort unspeakable, a deed in words I cannot say how gratifying to me.'

'Could my opinion really give you pleasure, Florence?'

The extreme simplicity and modesty with which the young man spoke, would at any other time have provoked his companion to laughter; as it was, she merely took that opportunity of disabusing him of an error which, being by no means confined to himself, may be worth mentioning.

'I think, Sir Charles, that we poor people who write, or who have written, are liable to a very unjust misrepresentation. We are assumed by many persons to have parted with the best feelings of our nature in exchange for some very questionable ones indeed. I did not—I do not, even now that it is mine no longer—underrate the profession of literature, nor affect to despise its honours and advantages. There are a large number of persons who fall into that mistake, I am aware; but I do not share it with them. If I were a writer, I should magnify my office, rather than pretend to despise it, as is the fashion with even some writers themselves. But do not—pray, do not imagine that any breath of public applause, any large-typed eulogium in newspapers, any elevation upon temporary and insecure pedestals of notoriety whatever, can weigh with the approval of the kind hearts at home. Those are lasting, and are always with us if we know how to keep them. The others are evanescent indeed, and often forsake us without any fault on our own part. The good opinion of any sensible man with a sound heart, is a greater private satisfaction to me than that of any anonymous critic whatsoever; but when that man is my friend, my benefactor, may I not almost be allowed to say my brother, dear Sir Charles?—'

'No; pray, don't say your brother,' replied Ryder earnestly, 'for that is what I want to speak to you about. You have given me courage to tell you something, if you will only please to listen.' He took her by the hand, which, trembling a little in his, made his speech the more confident, and led her to the same seat which Mr Onslow Bateman had pronounced to be so exceedingly uncomfortable. The young man, however, did not feel, or, at least, did not complain of, its knobs and points at all. 'When I was a lad, Florence, I loved, or thought I loved, your sister, as you know. I would do anything to serve her now, to shield her from misfortune, and to aid her with all my power, if she met with it; but I have not loved her, save as a brother, since she came to Rudesleigh. There is an additional reason for my loving her as a brother, Florence, since she is your sister, and beloved of you. Do not withdraw your hand, Florence, or at least not yet. It is the last time that I shall ever speak to you thus, if you so will it: do not unnecessarily soon awake me from this dream of happiness. I have suffered, Florence, now for years, for the mistake of my youth. I have atoned for it by a silence which, I sometimes thought, would have eaten away my heart. There is a void there as it is, Florence, which you alone can fill. I thought of your pride, too, for you are to the full as proud as your father, although in a different way. I saw you resented that I should be of use to him—that it was my greatest happiness to have you all about me in my home. You contrasted with harsh pride—nay, do not attempt to deceive one who has watched you with the eyes of love for years—your own circumstances, and those of your family, with mine, whom accident had elevated to unexpected wealth. You thought yourself—and if you were one who could think basely, I should call it a base thought—a dependant, whereas it was I who was living on your every look. One mistake of yours has been rectified past dispute. You thought

yourself obscure, and, behold, you have reached a height of fame of which no Ryder of Rudesleigh has yet even dreamed. It is that fame, which would deter another, that, having made you my superior, gives me boldness to say I love you. Florence, dear, darling Florence, can you love me?"

The two young people seemed to have exchanged their relative powers of speech; for long after Ryder's eloquent appeal was finished, the girl remained perfectly silent—which was the more reprehensible of her, as the audacious youth was actually consuming the interval in kissing her nearest cheek—and when she did speak, had not very much to say. Her brief reply was to the point, however, and seemed to afford every satisfaction. "I have always, always loved you, dearest Charles, although there was a time when I did my best to stifle it."

"For Ellen's sake?" exclaimed the young man penitently, in spite of his rapture. "What a fool I was! and you—you are nothing less than an angel!"

After this interview, these two young persons frequented that same solitary bowling-green with a curious pertinacity, each finding the other every morning there, as if by accident, and having found, politely remaining there to keep one another company. Sometimes Sir Charles came first, and sometimes Miss Florence—in the order that each could conveniently withdraw from his or her companions—and on the fourth morning it chanced to be the lady who is admiring the rainbow of flowers in the parterre, and the silvery flash of the fountain, as though she has never had the good-fortune to find herself there before. A footfall on the gravel meets those ears, so attentive to every movement of love: she blushes, so that the rose over which she leans and herself become one in colour; she expects to hear her own name, that never sounds half so sweetly as when murmured by the beloved voice. A hand is laid softly upon her shoulder; she turns round with her eyes brimming with tenderness and affection, and beholds—Mr Robert Marsden.

He is an undeniably handsome young man still—almost as handsome as we knew him at Teesdale How, although his order of beauty is not that which increases with years—but if he had been the sun-god himself, his presence just then would have been nought but an unmixed evil to Florence Bateman. Why had he not taken his decidedly wicked eyes, and too insinuating silken beard, elsewhere, where they would have been appreciated? She did not dare look her thoughts, however, for she was conscious of the disappointment which his unexpected appearance had already called up into her features, and feared the interpretation he might have put upon it. Marsden was not to her now what he had been, when a 'pup' in her father's house; she rather dreaded the fierce will that held its own alike against the delicate sapping of Mr Onslow Bateman, and the contemptuous front of Mr Hardy Wentworth. "Why don't you look at me, Florence?" said he, in a low and melancholy tone. "Am I hideous, or am I hateful to you?"

"You are neither, Mr Marsden," replied she, a little indignant at his "Florencing" her, although he was to be her brother-in-law; "but I was surprised at your sudden appearance here."

"So it seemed," replied the young man quietly; "I almost thought you were expecting somebody else."

We put it upon record with a blush that our pattern young woman here replied, with all the ingenuous air of an honest witness upon his oath in a court of justice, "Papa comes here to smoke his cigar occasionally, and then he likes a companion."

"He will not, however, do so this morning," answered Marsden, "for he has taken Ryder with him into the library to make choice of some books that he wishes to have the loan of while in London. Their employment gave me the greater hope of finding you alone,

Florence, for I have something very important to say to you."

"To me?" exclaimed Florence, with an air of great astonishment, but not without an additional throb or so of the heart-strings too.

"Yes, to you; to you, who above all women should understand human nature and its inconsistencies, since you have yourself painted it so admirably. You will know how to be charitable to its weaknesses, you will know how to appreciate its strength."

"I am quite at a loss to know what you mean, Mr Marsden; I only trust that unhappy book of mine may not have placed me in a false position with regard to you, as it seems to have done with respect to everybody else. It appears to me that you are overrating my abilities sadly!"

"Florence," interrupted the young man with a voice almost stern in its unusual gravity, "is it possible that you deny that the heart can change! Do you disbelieve that aught is true love which is not first love?"

The girl's colour came and went under his steadfast eye like April shadows, and she could not trust herself to speak to one who, as she deemed, had guessed her secret.

"You do not deny it, then," continued he; "perhaps you yourself have experienced such a change."

"No, Mr Marsden, I have not," replied she steadily; "but I have seen it in another. I acknowledge that the affections of youth may sometimes, and perhaps not rarely, be misplaced; that in spite of itself the leal true heart can no longer make its home where it first rested, and happy for it, if without hurt to any, it may change its dwelling."

"Happy for it, happy for it indeed," echoed Robert Marsden. "Florence, dear Florence, dearest to me than any woman born, listen to me. *Here* is the leal true heart. Here is the hand that would rather wed with you than with a princess: nay, you shall be a princess, being mine; for all my wealth is yours, and it is great, and you shall rule me, Florence, like a slave. Don't speak, but listen. You would say: "My sister, what of her?" I tell you that I know her well, a loving, trusting child, but one whose heart will never break for such a wrench as this. She'll weep a grief away in a fortnight—in three weeks at most. That's not the bride for me. Now, *you*—I read it now in your proud flush and angry eyes—would never bear to be so thwarted. You'd poison us both first; and so would I, by Heaven! I do not mean to rant; but while I look on you, dear Florence—glorious, brilliant-eyed Perfection that you are—I am not master of myself; I want some noble soul like yours to master me. I feel that on this sea of life, without some steady hand like yours to guide me, I shall wreck."

"You are acting out of a stage-play, Mr Marsden," replied Florence coldly, "and you are acting exceedingly ill. If all you said were true—nay, let me speak now—I should be sorry for your sake, more sorry for my sister's, but it would not move me one hair's-breadth towards loving you. The very mention of that word 'twixt me and you—the possibility of such a union thus suggested—is vile and hateful to me. I do not love you as a brother, Robert Marsden, for I do not love you at all; but I will try to look upon you with some regard for another's sake—not yours—and hope in time to forget this madness you have just now uttered. You will forget it yourself right soon, as I well know. If I thought that my recital of your words would open my dear sister's eyes, and save her from this marriage with you even now, I fairly tell you I would speak it all. But she is so fond, so loving, so credulously trustful of you—O heartless ingrate, if you treat her ill, may God's curse light on you!—that I dare not do it, I confess it, I dare not. O Robert Marsden, so much do I love that sister, and so little hold my own self-respect in comparison with her lasting happiness, that



if in anything you have just now been saying there is a gleam of truth, if you really have a kindness towards me separate from mere delusive passion and wayward wilfulness, I ask thus much, Oh spare my Ellen for my sake. Leave her: do not make her your wife; for I foresee a misery that will come of it far greater than any present grief at losing you.'

'And I?' observed Marsden quietly, but by no means unmoved by this outbreak of sisterly affection. 'What think you will become of me? Or am I not worth a thought?'

'You are worth much, Marsden. You might do both great and good things if you would. The nature that can inspire so many with admiration and regard cannot be wholly evil. That is why I shall now leave you, if not with much good will, without that contempt and loathing with which your conduct would otherwise have inspired me. Will you please to shake hands?'

He was about to take the proffered fingers, but she suddenly withdrew them from his grasp. 'Robert Marsden, you are not yet cured, I see. Shall I say, then, that I hate you?'

'I swear I love you better, more, than ever,' exclaimed the young man fervently. 'Is there no hope, none whatever, Florence?'

'Certainly none, sir,' replied Florence Bateman scornfully. 'Your friend, Charles Ryder, who is coming up the green yonder, is my affianced husband.'

#### CURIOSITIES OF THE 'OLD SERVICE.'

THE old service, with all its glories and all its faults, has passed away for ever; and officers and tars of that renowned school will soon be as scarce as bustards on Salisbury Plain. Steam has done it. 'Screws' have for ever superseded the fine old sailing liners; and the naval engineer is now a more important officer than the sailing-master. There is no help for it; it is an accomplished fact: but a good many able and sensible nautical men, who are not croakers nor grumblers, nor at all disposed to cavil at the change on personal grounds, do distinctly affirm that a steam-navy is the worst possible school for real seamanship, and that neither officers nor men of the new school can ever compete in that respect with their predecessors. Certainly, though there can be no doubt that as regards natural aptitude, our present men-of-war's-men are not degenerate sons of Neptune, yet they have not a tithe the *practice* of the old school. No sooner does the wind draw ahead, now-a-days, than the order is given to furl sails and get up steam, and mere mechanical motive-power entirely supplies the place of consummate nautical skill. Our task is not, however, to institute comparisons betwixt the new and the old services, we merely propose to gossip awhile about the latter, by compiling a number of choice, and, we believe, authentic anecdotes illustrative of the character of the men whose unrivalled skill and valour rendered the floating bulwarks of Britain an impregnable defence and safeguard throughout the last long European war.

With what racy anecdote shall we open our budget? Nothing more appropriate at this epoch of rifle-volunteering, and gossip of an impending French invasion, than sturdy old Lord Bridport's genuine seaman-like promise to George III. In 1793, in particular, there was such a panic about the French 'coming over' with dire intentions, that Farmer George alluded to it on giving an audience to the admiral. 'I can only say, sire,' answered Bridport, 'that so long as I hold command of the Channel fleet, they shall not come by water!'

When Lord Howe was captain of the *Magnanime*, cruising off the French coast, he anchored, through stress of weather, off a lee-shore. The ship rode with two anchors down, and the night was very stormy. By and by, the officer of the watch rushed into the

captain's cabin, hurriedly announcing that the anchors were 'coming home'—that is, losing their hold of the bottom, to the imminent jeopardy of the ship. 'Coming home, are they?' coolly answered Howe. 'Well, they are in the right, for I don't know who would stay out on a night like this!'

That grand old admiral, Collingwood, was especially noted for his extreme care of the king's stores, and was far more concerned about any loss or damage to them than about his personal risk in battle. The present Vice-admiral Robinson tells a very characteristic anecdote to this effect. "'Oh, Mr Mullins! Mr Mullins!'" he (Collingwood) groaned out to the master of the *Excellent*, as she was getting belaboured on the 14th of February by two Spanish line-of-battle-ships—"oh, Mr Mullins! they never shifted that beautiful new fore-topsail before we came into action, and now they won't leave it worth a pin!" We have heard of both officers and seamen shifting their clothes—putting on their worst suits—before going into action; and it seems that 'Old Cuddie,' as Collingwood was familiarly and affectionately called, would have liked to put his ship in an 'old suit' of sails, prior to exchanging broadsides with an enemy. 'He entered the navy,' says Admiral Robinson, 'at a time of rough and rude struggling, a coarseness little better than that described by Smollett in *Roderick Random*. We remember Lord St Vincent leaving his berth for the loss of twenty pounds, messing on his chest, washing his own clothes, and making a pair of trousers out of the ticking of his bed. In these scenes, the illustrious Collingwood passed the soft and impressionable period of a midshipman's life for no less than sixteen years; and, in consequence, when he became a wealthy peer, caring nothing about money, he considered pea-soup and a slice of ship's pork food for the gods, brown sugar quite good enough for any gentleman, and that the habitual use of white would be approaching to the historical extravagance of peacock's brains.' The vivid picture which Admiral Robinson gives, in his old age, of Collingwood's appearance at the battle of Trafalgar, is too good to be omitted. 'I see before me, at the end of half a century, dear Old Cuddie walking the break of the poop with his little triangular gold-laced cocked-hat, tights, silk stockings, and buckles, musing over the progress of the fight, and munching an apple.'

That great sea-captain who yet survives among us, Thomas, Earl of Dundonald, when Lord Cochrane, perpetrated a stroke of the finest irony. Commanding a little brig, called the *Speedy*, of 14 guns, and only 54 officers and men, he actually captured a Spanish xebec or frigate, the *Gamo*, of 32 guns and 319 men. The Spanish officer who succeeded to the command of this vessel asked Lord Cochrane to give him a certificate that he had done his duty; and Commander Cochrane did so in these words: 'I do hereby certify that Don [with many high-sounding names] conducted himself like a real Spaniard.' 'This precious document,' remarks Captain Brenton in his *Naval History*, 'was received with every mark of respect and gratitude.'

As regards the captains of the old service, the majority of them were of the Benbow and Charley Napier type—capital seamen, but in many instances not gentlemen either by education or manners. This is not to be wondered at, considering that even when they were sons of gentlemen by birth, they frequently went to sea at ages varying from ten to thirteen, and never afterwards had much opportunity of becoming accomplished or refined. Not a few had risen by dint of sheer merit from before the mast; nay, there were several instances of pressed men attaining the rank of admiral. But one and all, whether sprung from plebeian or aristocratic families, seem to have been imbued with a hearty spirit of thorough devotion to their profession, and a literal love of hard fighting. At Trafalgar, a captain of the old school ran his liner

into the heart of the fight, and had a couple or more of the enemy's ships firing into him as hard as they could pelt. The splinter-netting over his quarter-deck was shot away, and knocked him down, and entangled him in its meshes. When he got clear of net and splinters, he jumped up, partially stunned, and roared out: 'Let us come on—let us come on! I'm blown if I strike! I'll never strike—no, never! to nobody whatsoever!'—a declaration heartily and deservedly cheered by his crew.

Our second illustrative anecdote we quote from a volume of the *Naval Chronicle* for 1812. It runs thus: 'Whilst in command of his majesty's sloop *Renard*, Captain Coghlan fell in with the *Lily*, a French privateer-ship (formerly an English sloop of war, captured by the enemy on the Halifax station), off St Domingo, and brought her to action. During the height of the engagement, the French captain, by way, as he supposed, of intimidating our tars, hailed them to "strike." Captain Coghlan, who heard it, instantly took his trumpet and replied: "Ay, I'll strike, and hard too, my lad, directly." The next broadside fired from the *Renard* sunk the *Lily* with the greater part of the crew.'

What shall we say of the men—the 'hearts of oak,' who literally were 'always ready' to fight and to conquer again and again? It would not be difficult to fill a folio volume with genuine racy anecdotes of Jack's proverbial bull-dog courage, indomitable endurance, generosity, and humour.

'There!' groaned a seaman, when his captain refused to engage an enemy of vastly superior force—'there goes my prize-money!' But dear as prize-money might be to seamen, they panted for victory yet more, as the following striking anecdote, told by Captain Brenton, attests: 'A British sailor, who had both his legs shot off while the *Minerve* lay under the fire of the batteries, was carried to the cockpit. Waiting for his turn to be dressed, he heard the cheers of the crew on deck, and eagerly demanded what they meant. Being told that the ship was off the shoal, and would soon be clear of the forts, "Then damn the legs!" exclaimed the poor fellow, and taking his knife from his pocket, he cut the remaining muscles which attached them to him, and joined in the cheers with the rest of his comrades. When the ship was taken, he was placed in the boat to be conveyed to the hospital; but determined not to survive the loss of liberty, he slacked his tourniquets, and bled to death.'

In the old service, women—usually wives of petty officers and of 'leading seamen'—were allowed to be on board King George's ships, and heroically did these daughters of Britannia generally behave. At the battle of the Nile, women as well as boys served as 'powder-monkeys.' Some were wounded, and one died of her wounds, and was buried on an island in the bay. She was a Leith woman. Another, an Edinburgh woman, 'bore a son in the heat of the action!' So says old John Nicol, mariner, in his autobiography, published many years ago. In Rodney's victory, a woman fought at a gun on the main-deck, and informed the admiral that she did so simply to supply the place of her husband, who was carried below, wounded. Rodney told her she had no business to do so, but he presented her with ten guineas. In 1812, the *Swallow* man-of-war had a desperate encounter with two enemy's ships of very superior force, off Frejus, and lost many men. A seaman, named Phelan, had his wife on board, who, as usual in the case of females, was stationed in the cockpit to assist the surgeon. Whilst there, she learned that her husband was wounded. She rushed on deck, and received him in her arms. The rest of the affecting story will be best told in the words of an officer of the ship. 'He faintly raised his head to kiss her—she burst into a flood of tears, and told him to take courage, "All would yet be well," but scarcely

pronounced the last syllable, when an ill-directed shot took her head off. The poor tar, who was closely wrapt in her arms, opened his eyes once more, then shut them for ever. What renders the circumstance the more affecting was, the poor creature had been only three weeks delivered of a fine boy, who was thus in a moment deprived of a father and a mother. As soon as the action subsided, the feelings of the tars, who wanted no unnecessary incitement to stimulate them, were all interested for poor Tommy—for so he was called. Many said, and all feared, he must die; they all agreed he should have a hundred fathers, but what could be the substitute of a nurse and a mother? However, the mind of humanity soon discovered there was a Maltese goat on board, belonging to the officers, which gave an abundance of milk; and as there was no better expedient, she was resorted to for the purpose of suckling the child, who, singular to say, is thriving, and will be one of the finest little fellows in the world; and so tractable is his nurse, that even now she lies down when poor little Tommy is brought to be suckled by her. Phelan and his wife were sewed up in one hammock, and, it is needless to say, buried in one grave.'

Sorry are we to say that the seamen of the old service, as a body, were not by any means remarkable for conjugal fidelity. A very considerable percentage of them literally endorsed Dibdin's lines:

In every mess I find a friend,  
In every port a wife.

About the year 1812, a seaman of the *Edgar* wrote the following letter—which a Cornwall paper correctly printed at the time—to his wife at Truro. For brazen impudence and downright plain-dealing, it can never be surpassed. Dating from 'H.M.S. *Edgar*, at Plymouth Dock,' this affectionate spouse says: 'MY DEAR GRACE—This comes with my kind love, hoping it will find you as it leaves me. I hope if the child is a boy, you will call it after my name, for my sake, & as I do not intend never to see you again, you may be married as soon as you will, for I shall be married as soon as I can. So no more at present from your affectionate husband, J. M.' We are not informed what 'dear Grace' thought of this epistle from her 'affectionate husband,' but it is not improbable that she availed herself of his liberal permission.

#### THE BIRD-BOY.

THE corn's spiked gold round the sheep in the fold  
Presses with fostering care;  
Now the rose is dead, and the May-bloom's shed,  
And the lily-bloom's melted to air.  
The birds flock up, like flies from a cup,  
In a thick swarm, noisy and black:  
How the great rooks rise when the bird-boy plies  
His clicky, clacky—click, click, clack.

For miles away, the poppies at play  
Flutter their signal flags;  
Round their white ash ring, the trampers sing,  
Sunning their patches and rags.  
And up in the blue, where clouds are few,  
Noisy and scattering black,  
The rook-cloud flies when the bird-boy plies  
His clicky, clacky—click, click, clack.

WALTER THORNBERY.

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